

IDENTIFYING CENTRAL ISSUES

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Social Sciences
U. S. History
“The Secession Crisis”
Civil War

Name: _____

Directions: Identify the main ideas in two primary sources that deal with the secession crisis of 1860-1861. Read the two extracts below carefully and answer the questions that follow.

South Carolina’s Declaration of Causes and Secession (December 24, 1860)

[T]he State of South Carolina having resumed her separate and equal place among nations, deems it due to herself, to the remaining United States of America, and to the nations of the world, that she should declare the immediate causes which had led to this act...

We assert that fourteen of the States have deliberately refused for years past to fulfill their constitutional obligations.... The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the acts of Congress [the Fugitive Slave Act], or render useless any attempt to execute them....[T]he States of Ohio and Iowa have refused to surrender to justice fugitives charged with murder, and with inciting servile insurrection in the States of Virginia. Thus the constitutional compact has been deliberately broken and disregarded by the non-slaveholding States; and the consequences follows that South Carolina is released from her obligation [to remain in the Union]....

A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to Slavery.

Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address (March 5, 1861)

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so”...

This country...belongs to the people who inhabit it. ‘Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it.

1. What was the purpose of South Carolina’s declaration?
2. What actions by northern states contributed to South Carolina’s decision to secede?
3. Why did South Carolina regard Lincoln’s election as a threatening development?

4. How did President Lincoln try to ease South Carolina's concern about his election?

5. What alternative to secession did Lincoln propose?